[0046] In one embodiment of the invention, each of the symbols is used only once in formulating a winning payout result. In other words, the star symbol at display subsegment **336** is not used in connection with the star symbols at display subsegments **326**, **328**, **330**, and **332** to formulate another winning payout result. In such an embodiment, either one of the star symbols at display subsegments **334**, **336** could be used to formulate the winning symbol combination of five stars on the payline.

[0047] In accordance with another embodiment, "each" of the star symbols in display subsegments **334**, **336** can be used to formulate a winning symbol combination with display subsegments **326**, **328**, **330**, and **332**, which indicates that display subsegments **326**, **328**, **330**, and **332** may be "reused" in formulating additional winning symbol combinations. For example, a first winning symbol combination would include the display subsegments **326**, **328**, **330**, **332**, and **334**, while a second winning symbol combination would include the display subsegments **326**, **328**, **330**, **332**, and **336**.

[0048] As described above, the use of a single symbol, such as the star symbol shown at the R3-C2 intersection, may be used in various modes. A first mode was described above, where the single symbol is used only once in formulating a winning result. In a second embodiment, the single symbol may be used a predetermined number of times, such as four, which corresponds to the number of display subsegments associated with other display segments. Alternatively, in the second mode, the predetermined number of times in which the single symbol may be used can be "always," such that it may be used as many times as possible, depending on the number of display subsegments utilized in the grid **300**. For example, if the grid **300** implemented four display subsegments for each display segment (as depicted in the illustrated example of **FIG. 3**), the single star symbol at display subsegment **328** could be used in formulating winning payout combinations with all four display subsegments of adjacent display segments. In other words, in this second mode of operation, the single symbol at display subsegment **328** is equivalent to four display subsegments each having a star symbol resulting therein.

[0049] In one embodiment, each symbol associated with a display subsegment is used only once in formulating a winning payout result, except as described above for a display subsegment such as display subsegment **328**. Multiple winning symbol combinations may, however, be generated using the same symbol on a common payline. For example, the horizontal payline corresponding to R3316 has already been shown to have generated a winning symbol combination of five star symbols in display subsegments **326**, **328**, **330**, **332**, and **334**. However, if additional star symbols had been presented in the R3-C1, R3-C3, and R3-C4 display segments, and the second mode of operation were implemented such that the star symbol at display subsegment **328** could be reused, then additional winning star symbol combinations would result. For example, assume that the symbols at display subsegments **338**, **340**, and **342** were star symbols rather than the symbols displayed, a second winning symbol combination of five star symbols would result in display subsegments **338**, **328**, **340**, **342**, and **336**. As can be seen, multiple winning symbol combinations may be formulated along a common payline, even where it is the same symbol (e.g., star symbol) creating the multiple winning symbol combinations. Other various payout scenarios may be used in connection with the present invention as well, such as providing the payout based on the highest winning combination along that payline. A variety of different predetermined payout scenarios may be used in connection with the present invention. Further examples will be described below.

[0050] **FIG. 4** is a flow diagram of an exemplary embodiment of a method for utilizing multi-symbol display segments in slot game activities in accordance with the invention. A number of available paylines are provided **400**, where each payline includes a predetermined number of display segments. The gaming participants need not avail themselves to every payline available in connection with the slot game. In one embodiment, the number of paylines utilized by the gaming participant is dependent on the wager input or otherwise allocated to a particular spin. In other embodiments, the gaming participant can select which one or more of the available paylines in which to participate.

[0051] For each display segment, a number n display subsegments are provided **402** in each display segment. In one embodiment each display segment incorporates an equal number of display subsegments, such as four subsegments. In another embodiment, the number of display subsegments varies from display segment to display segment. For example, some display segments may be associated with one display subsegment, others may be associated with two display subsegments, while others still may be associated with three, four, or more display subsegments. In an exemplary embodiment of the invention such as that depicted in connection with **FIG. 3**, each display segment is capable of presenting different numbers of display subsegments. The example provided in **FIG. 3** illustrates that a display segment may present four symbols in corresponding display subsegments, while others present only one symbol in the display segment for a particular spin. On a subsequent spin, a display segment previously displaying only one symbol may display four symbols in corresponding display subsegments.

[0052] A user wager is accepted **404**, which authorizes the gaming participant to engage in the slot game activity. The reels are spun as shown at block **406**, where in one embodiment of the invention each display subsegment is associated with a virtual reel presented on a video display device. The reels are stopped **408** in accordance with a random number generator (RNG) to provide a random (or pseudo-random) outcome for each spin. As shown at block **410**, for each of the n symbols in the display segments of a payline, it is determined whether an adjacent display segment includes a corresponding symbol in one of n display subsegments. For example, for each of the display segments in a first display segment, it is determined whether a second, adjacent display segment includes a matching symbol. This is determined for each of the display subsegments associated with each display segment. It is then determined **412** whether any "line pays" have occurred for the payline, which is based on a predetermined number of adjacent display segments having corresponding symbols in one of the n display subsegments. For example, a line pay indicates a winning symbol combination on that payline, where a predetermined number (e.g., three) successive display segments all have a common symbol in one of the n display subsegments of each display